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An illustration of how helpful to the civil engineer the mechanical mind can be in securing an adequate machine to accomplish a desired end is well set forth in the work of the Board of Water Supply of New York. That organization always has had its mechanical section, and our reliance today in New York City on the automatic closing of a valve a hundred feet or more below the surface, if a break occurs in the piping or appurtenances at the surface, is due to an idea promulgated by a civil engineer and developed into a highly efficient and dependable machine by the mechanical engineers. This is but one of many instances where the mechanical engineers' aid has been successfully applied to the Catskill water system problems. Just how the mechanical engineers can be enlisted for our work is a question more easily asked than answered. The writer believes that our water works specialty manufacturers could use to advantage more mechanical engineering skill in the development of their appliances, and that a more liberal spirit among water works men to try equipment that embodies new ideas would be helpful.

W. W. BRUSH.

STANDARDIZING UNDERSIZE FIRE COUPLINGS

It is most gratifying to be able to report to the Association the successful standardization of a considerable number of undersized fire couplings, for this is a long step forward in the work which the Association authorized in 1905 and has not always progressed as rapidly as those who have it at heart would welcome. Trenton, N. J., employs the National Standard couplings. Lambertville and High Bridge, N. J., and New Hope, Pa., are suburbs which rely upon Trenton for help in case a fire gets away from the local departments. At High Bridge the threads on the fittings had an outside diameter of 3 inches and there are eight threads to the inch, while at Lambertville and New Hope the outside diameter was $3\frac{1}{8}$ inches with eight threads to the inch. In these towns there were 191 pairs of hose couplings, 41 play pipes, 18 hydrant hose gates, 16 chemical and pump connections, 113 hydrant caps, 219 hydrant nozzles, 2 siameses, 5 double males, 2 suction reducers and 2 steamer connections to be standardized. The town authorities requested this work to be done and it was accomplished in two and one-half days by three men, with a helper during part of the time to handle the hose.

The results show that two experienced men can standardize

threads of this kind on 125 pairs of hose couplings or on 75 two-outlet street hydrants in a day. A few hydrant nipples and undersized male couplings were cracked while being expanded, either because the shells were very thin or the composition of the metal was inferior in character. The results of this first field test of such work encourage the belief that such standardization is practicable and satisfactory in the case of undersized fittings down to an outside diameter of $2\frac{3}{4}$ inch. It is now desirable to obtain authority to standardize oversized fittings with outside diameters of $3\frac{5}{8}$ inches or $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches. If these field tests prove as satisfactory as those made in the suburbs of Trenton the standardization of fittings in municipalities generally can be undertaken with the certainty of a successful outcome.

F. M. GRISWOLD.

A STANDARD FORM OF CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT

Members of the Association who attended the St. Louis convention will recall that the president of the American Society of Engineering Contractors, Albert P. Greensfelder, made an informal address on the subject of a standard form of contract for construction, which led to the appointment of a committee of the American Water Works Association to investigate the subject. The informal address referred to was printed in the JOURNAL of December, 1918, and the report of the committee appeared in the number for September, 1919. The report was sent to Mr. Greensfelder, as the original mover of the investigation, and the following comment on it has been received from him:

We cannot concur that it is wise to have lawyers continue to defend bad practices. We believe that it is up to progressive associations to present good practices. Contracts that are equitable and fair to both parties tend to reduce legal controversies. We do not take issue so much with specifications drawn by older and more experienced members of your Association, but rather with those presented by inexperienced men. It would surely seem to be the province of an Association as enterprising and progressive as yours to protect the interests of water-works owners by drafting an equitable form of contract. Enforcing the use of such a contract would be unnecessary, as custom will gradually bring it into current use, as the forms adopted by the American Institute of Architects have demonstrated.

The history of standard forms of contract in other fields than that of water works has been a record of very slow progress even when